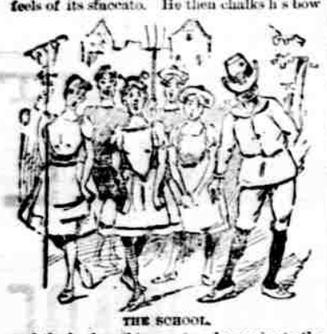
BILL NYE AS A PLAYWRIGHT.

He Describes a New Opera of Which He Is the Author.

I HAVE just returned from a private rehearsal of a new operetta of which I am the author, and hasten to write a fair, honest criticism of it for the press. In this criticism I shall try to be perfectly frank to mention any defects, and yet I shall try to avoid hurting the author's feelings. I want to score the operetta with a merciless hand, and yet I do not wish to give myself needless pain.

The operetta itself is called "The Singed Cat," because it is really so much better than it seems to be. The music was composed partly by myself and partly by a count who plays on the ferryboats in summer and has his winters to himself. He does not wish to have his name used, because, as he says, he is afraid that "foreign powers will get on to it and make him come back to attend to the count business again." He says it is very disagreeable to be a count and live on a long, slim pedigree and what the neighbors bring in from time to time.

The orchestra opens the performance with a selection from the "Flying Dutchman." Difficult as it may appear, the orchestra makes a good selection from this gentleman, and it is played well after everything is ready. It takes some little time for an orchestra to get ready, however. The man who bites off the first joint of the clarionet breathes a few liquid notes, the first violin sounds "A" and the gentleman with the bassoon looks up into its dark recesses to see if any cayenne or kittens have been deposited there since he played last. The superintendent of the large violin stands it upon end and feels of its staccato. He then chalks h s bow



THE SCHOOL.

and the leader whispers in a low voice to the man who salivates the cornet. The snare drum soloist gets his assortment of drums into a semi-circle, hangs his triangle where he can get at it, runs his eye over the xylophone, sleigh bells, bird call, picket fence, bones, castanets, cymbals, Swiss bells and fortissimo. The leader writes his autograph in the atmosphere with his stick and the band goes into committee of the whole with a wild snort. A difficult piece then follows. Some of the audience are heard to state that they wish it had been so difficult that the orchestra could not have played it.

The curtain now rises, and a primary school of over 800 pupils is seen passing in review across the stage, singing a song of forty-nine verses, meantime going through a system of calisthenics. In making one night stands with "The Singed Cat," most any primary school will do with a few rehearsals for this chorus. Get these children secured in advance and all their parents will come to see how the children look on the stage. I thought of this myself.

THE SOPRANO.

A beautiful soprano now comes on, accompanied by her voice, and wonders where Felix is. She decides to sing a small song while waiting for him. The song is an arpeggio with diatonic scales on it. It begins low and fluttering, like the cry of a wounded clay pigeon, and gradually soars upward, like the price of coal, and ends with some artistic gargling which suggests a warble in the upper register.

As she gets more confidence in herself she becomes more irritated because Felix did not get there at the same time he said he would.

The prima donna of the "Singed Cat" has a pleasant voice, full of timbre and fine allegro movement, besides a trill on the andante. Mr. Riley, who has heard her, says that when she pulls out the last joint on her crescendo and opens her upper register, her mouth looks not unlike a stab in the dark. She sings with the whole arm movement, and her action is good as she goes by the judges' stand. She has a selection in the second act called "Back to Our Mountains," in which she starts off with a ritard in which she emits a chest note which tests the acoustics of the hall, that she is tickled to get back to her mountains, such as they are, and is pleased with the altitude. She has assisted in "The Damnation of Faust," but otherwise her conduct has been good. She is a widow, her husband being deceased. He was listening to the song of a buzz saw near Stillwater, Minn., in 1875, and got an idea that the saw had something confidential to communicate and desired to take him apart for that purpose. Anyway, he was in that condition when they found him. For that reason her music is frequently tearful and often solfeggio in spots. Her repertoire is very large and has a lid on it. The only criticism that I feel warranted in making, and I hate to do that, is that she has slightly ruptured her voice by trying several years ago to sing a duet with herself and thus draw two salaries.

When the applause has died away Felix comes in with a baritone voice and diminished triad. He thinks of the first verse while the piccolo makes a few desultory remarks, and then he explains how he could not get there when he agreed to because the jury disagreed, or something of that kind. He swallows an imaginary clam with the shell on it, and begins in a low, passe roundelay which develops into a duodecimo run. He is accompanied by a running mate, consisting of a flute with a large red mustache over the main entrance.

FELIX.

"The Singed Cat" will be produced at the Polo grounds early in January. Let there be a full house.—Bill Nye in New York World.

STORIES ABOUT MEN.

He Wanted to Buy a Jewsharp from Platt Evans.

Cal Thomas, who always has a good story to tell, has this one on Platt Evans, a stuttering joker, who was one of the early pioneers of Cincinnati: "In early days," says Cal, "it used to be thought capital fun to send a countryman from store to store inquiring for the things he would be certain not to find at the places to which he was sent. One day a fellow came, as he had been directed, to Platt's store to buy a jewsharp. Platt was a merchant tailor. He was busy with a customer as the man appeared, but, observing that several of the 'boys' had dropped in at the door just to see what Platt would do, he 'caught on' at once, and responded to the inquiry for the musical instrument, 'W-w-wait a minute.' Having served his customer, he picked up a pair of glove stretchers and approached the rural melodist with, 'Le-let me m-measure your m-m-mouth,' and, introducing the stretchers, manipulated them so as to transform the aperture into a horizontal yawn, awful to see, and capacious enough to hold a dozen jewsharps. Removing the apparatus, he examined it carefully and deliberately, as one might scrutinize a thermometer or a pocket compass, and then dismissed the unsuccessful hunter for jewsharps, as he said in a tone of well feigned disappointment: 'W-w-we hain't g-g-got any your s-size.'"—Exchange.

What Kept Lincoln Awake.

During the darkest days of the war there was a squabble in Syracuse over the appointment of a postmaster. Two factions had candidates, and each had sent to Washington numerously signed petitions for the appointment of its favorite. Finally, to get the matter settled, a delegation composed of the wealthiest men of the town and several of the most prominent ministers and lawyers, headed by Gen. Leavenworth, visited the national capital and secured an audience with President Lincoln. Gen. Leavenworth had carefully prepared his speech to Mr. Lincoln, and it ran something like this:

"MR. PRESIDENT: It is with great reluctance that we intrude upon you this morning. We appreciate the awful responsibilities and perplexities of your position, and do not forget that the very life of the nation is in your hands. But, Mr. President, the people of the great loyal north are at your back, and they are praying, sir, that your life may be spared and that you may be given strength to carry this war through to a successful issue."

Mr. Lincoln listened to Gen. Leavenworth with some impatience until he reached this point, and then interrupted him with:

"I assure you, my dear sir, that it isn't the war or the arms that is worrying the life out of me; it is that Syracuse postoffice that is keeping me awake nights."

Gen. Leavenworth did not finish his speech. The delegation presented their case in the briefest manner, and felt more comfortable when they reached Pennsylvania avenue than they did in the presence of the president.—Philadelphia Press.

Sturdy John Marshall.

The descendants of Chief Justice John Marshall are a sturdy race. One of them, bearing the great jurist's name, owns a farm in Virginia and runs a saw mill thereon. He got down in the buzz saw pit not along ago to fix a loose screw. Suddenly he felt something moving behind him, and he threw his arm up and felt the saw cut right through about the elbow, almost from skin to skin. Raising his head he struck the saw, which cut a groove right through his hair, over his forehead, and face and down into his throat. When he was taken out his face was one mass of bleeding flesh. They laid him on the grass and brought a surgeon. While the latter was running across the fields to the spot where the men had left Marshall he heard his voice saying, as well as his wounds would permit: "Shove this stuff away from my eye so that I can see whether it's hurt." They did "shove the stuff" away from his eye as carefully as possible, and he gave them one ghastly glance and then murmured: "It's all right; I can see." It took the surgeon an hour and a half to dress all his wounds. He endured the pain with perfect composure. Within a month he was out again as well as ever. Some one was telling one of the old darkies on the place, while "Marster John" was still in bed, what a narrow escape he had had from death. "Huh!" said the darky, "take heap more than that to kill Marse John. Why, if you wanted to kill Marse John you'd have to cut his head off—and then hide the head."—Chicago Herald.

A Judge's Quick Repartee.

The following was perpetrated by a judge of one of our higher local courts, now off the bench, but whose identity will be instantly discovered by many lawyers without mentioning his name. On the first Monday of a term many jurors were as usual in line before him to present reasons for being excused from service. Among them was a very dirty, unkempt, shaggy bearded man, who, despite the efforts of the attendants to restrain him, insisted on advancing to the judge's desk and speaking privately with him. The judge, noticing his importunity, signified his willingness to allow the talesman to approach, and then said to him somewhat sternly: "Well, sir, what is it?" The man leaned over the bench until his lips almost touched the judge's ear, and then whispered: "I've got the itch." The crowded court room was watching the result with curiosity. "Mr. Clerk," said the judge instantly, without the slightest change of expression, and in a voice painfully loud and distinct: "Mr. Clerk, he's got the itch. Scratch him."—New York Tribune.

A Peep at Joseph Chamberlain.

The Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain is one of the most peculiar of the thousands of peculiar folks who have feasted at Delmonico's great dining hall. He sat through the long dinner of the chamber of commerce on Tuesday night and listened to the flow of oratory and not the faintest indication of a smile or even interest flitted across his clear cut features. Secretary Fairchild tried to engage him in conversation, and Mr. Depew, his next neighbor, seemed disposed to make things pleasant for the stranger. Mr. Chamberlain, with his gold rimmed monocle stuck in his right eye, would show momentary interest in the courtesy of his two neighbors and relapse into his frozen state. He glared straight ahead like a soldier on dress parade. He spoke, of course, with an "English, yer know" accent, and in his speech of 2,000 words only two forlorn and unprotected periods were accommodated with standing room. It was a speech of commas.—New York Sun.

Mark Twain as a Lecturer.

The last time I heard him lecture, after having got rid of his hands, he stood before the house as stiff and silent as an unopened oyster. The audience was as still as he. After a long pause, during which every one was painfully wondering what ailed him, he said "H'm!" and immediately relapsed into silence. A full minute went by during which he remained perfectly quiet with his eyes staring straight before him. Then he said "H'm!" again. At last, some one started a little ripple of applause. Mark looked up, radiant with smiles. "Thank you," he said. "I was waiting for you to begin!"—New York Tribune.

The Car of Juggernaut.

A Calcutta paper calls attention to a remarkable decline in the popularity of the great Rath Jattra or Car festival at the Juggernaut temple in Orissa. That the number of visitors this year should show a large decrease might have been expected, owing to the recent loss of two pilgrim steamers and to the common belief that the loss of the third had been predicted. It appears, however, that although the falling off is more marked this year, it has been going on steadily for some years past. The religious enthusiasm of the crowd is said to be also disappearing. There is no longer a wild rush for the car, in which the idol is dragged from the temple to a country house and back again, and on several occasions it has been necessary to hire coolies to perform the work.—New York Sun.

The Pop Balls of Dakota.

The pop weed is a Dakota curiosity. Its stalk is like that of a cabbage, with a large, round top, the size and color of a Hubbard squash. The "northwesters" in the fall blow the pop balls off the stalks and roll them for miles over the prairies till they reach uneven country, where they pile up like snowbanks and serve buffalo herds as a shelter from the winter blizzards. A pop ball which meets any hard object explodes with a tremendous report and sends about thousands of fine, needle like seeds in every direction.—Philadelphia Call.

"BOOKS THAT HAVE HELPED US."

Among the books that help us all
Along life's dreary track,
In summer, winter, spring and fall,
None beats the Almanac.

Of past events it serves us with
A record, full, complete,
In sentences as full of pith
As eggs are full of meat.

Its weather prophecies are true,
Or nearly, if not quite,
And knock the Signal Service Bureau's higher than a kite.

From day to day with confidence
We to its pages go,
To find, foes—clear—mild—cold—intense—
High—wind—"Look—out—for—snow."

But better far than heat or cold,
Snow, hail, rain, thunder showers,
It gives us jokes that Adam told
To Eve in Eden's bowers.

The jeu d'esprit that mirth provokes—
For which the babies cry,
The old, the dear familiar jokes,
The jokes that never die.

Among the books that help us all
Along life's dreary track,
In summer, winter, spring and fall,
None beats the Almanac.—Boston Courier.

The Lime Kiln Club.

"My attenshun," said Brother Gardner, as he carefully pulled down his vest, "has bin directed to de follerin' article in a Chicago paper:

"'Skipped.—The treasurer of the celebrated Lime Kiln club at Detroit has changed his postal address to Canada. He took over $7,000 with him and it is said the club is badly broken up. Let us have some philosophy from Brother Gardner on the subject of official honesty.'

"How dat report got abroad I doan' know," continued the old man, "but it was made outer hull cloth, as we all know. Dar sots our respected treasurer in his usual seat an' de funds of de club ar' safe in bank. Human foresight an' human hindsight hev deir weak pints, an' de day may possibly come when some sich item may be true in part. I may take de liberty of briefly explainin' to de meetin' fur de benefit of any suspishus member de modus operandi on which de finanshul system of dis club am conducted.

"Fustly—All de moneys received fur dues, payment of fines, etc., ar' counted three times ober by de three members of the finance committee. By dat time de figures are k'rect, an' all de bogus pieces sorted out to send to de furrein heathen. De sum ar' entered on three separate cash books, an' each member must check up de entry made by de odder.

"Secondly—De cash ar' den passed ober to Sir Isaac Walpole, Waydown Bebee, Elder Spooner an' myself. We recount it an' enter it on four mo' cash books.

"Thirdly—It den goes to de treasurer, who counts it again, makes anodder entry an' de five of us parceed to de bank an' deposit it. On de way down we keep a clus watch on each odder.

"Fourthly—Not a cent kin be drawed frum de bank widout I issue de check an' fo' odder pussons sign it.

"Fifthly—When de treasurer of dis club so fur forgits hisself as to absorb $7,000 of our money an' cross de ribber it will be a cold day—cold 'nuff for two undershirts. It can't be dun, eben if he wanted to git his name up an' run fur some fat offis.

"Sixthly—As to any remarks on de subjick of offishus dishonesty, our feelin's ar' purty generally known. It ar' mighty few honest men who run fur any offis whar' dar' am a chance to steal. It ar' mighty few who could git offis if dey wanted it. Candydates fur fat offises, in dese days, ar' selected by various rings. Each ring wants a man it kin handle. Each ring gits dar. De fitness of a candydate as to honesty has no bearin' on de case. If he doan' turn out a thief or an embezzler befo' his term ar' up all people ar' surprised. If he does turn out, de public holds its bref to find out how many others ar' guilty as well, fur it understands dat he has not profited alone. When de honest men of dis kentry riz up an' insist wid deir 'ballots dat only respectable men shall hold offis, de great highway to Canada will be grass grown."—Detroit Free Press.

Just the Same.

It was on one of the ferryboats the other day. An old man, who seemed to have some trouble with his foot, pulled off his shoe in the presence of two scores of passengers, rubbed his heel for a moment as he looked around, and then hobbling over to a motherly looking woman he asked:

"Ma'am, will you oblige me with the loan of a pair of pincers for a few seconds?"

"Pincers!" she gasped.

"Yes'm—want 'em to pull a peg out of my shoe. If you have a tack hammer, perhaps I can drive the infernal thing in."

"Why, my soul! but I haven't anything of the sort!"

"Haven't you? Well, it's all right, and you needn't feel bad about it. We are all careless critters, and I often come away from the house and forget my whetstone, wagon jack or gimlet. No excuses, ma'am—it's all right—all right."—Detroit Free Press.

Erroneous.

"Is that you, Charley?"

It was a beautiful night and the soft rays of the moon fell about the fair form of the speaker like a benediction.

The young man had come quietly from the gate and the slight noise he made in ascending the steps attracted the girl's attention.

"Great heavens!" he muttered to himself, "how I love that maiden."

"Is that you, Charley?" she repeated, in a low, sweet tone; "I'm so glad you came. Draw a chair from the parlor; it is lovely here in the moonlight."

But, alas! it wasn't Charley, it was George; and the cold wind whistled through his whiskers.—Life.

Returning Letters Was All Nonsense.

A Somerset business man not long since had occasion to write to a gentleman who evidently had few correspondents. The envelope had the usual "Return in ten days to ——, Somerset, Ky.," on it. In about ten days the letter came back to him, accompanied by a scrawling note, the writer saying that he had returned the letter according to the request on the envelope, though he "didn't see why he was so all fired particular about having it sent back."—Somerset (Ky.) Republican.

A Soft Snap.

Proprietor (Great Eastern Daily)—Have you been to the magistrate to swear to our circulation today?

Business Manager—No, there is plenty of time.

"Well, if you're not busy go down to the press room and as soon as the edition is run off bring the papers up stairs and I'll help you fold them."—Omaha World.

"I can raise spirits," said a long-haired medium. "Thash's all right!" exclaimed a drunken fellow in the audience. "You raish 'em an' I'll put 'em dow ."